

Promising Practice: Pre-Nursing Assistant Classes Central Community College Health Education Laddering Program (Project HELP)

An innovative method of preparing students to become Nursing Assistants (NAs) was developed by Project HELP, a Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance. Pre-NA classes are offered for students who score between a 3rd-grade and 5th-grade reading level on the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment.

The HPOG grantee found that some students had difficulty in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course because it was hard to learn all the medical vocabulary that they are to know upon course completion during the short time frame of the course. In order to be successful in completing the CNA course, participants must be reading at a 5th- to 7th-grade level. All participants complete the TABE assessment upon entrance into Project HELP at Central Community College, and this assessment helps project staff determine if students are at these reading levels. If students are not currently performing at a 5th- to 7th-grade level, the Pre-NA course can help them to polish their skills.

There are multiple learning objectives for the Pre-NA course:

- Increase participant knowledge of medical/nursing terminology utilized in the CNA course.
- Increase participant comfort level in the traditional college classroom.
- Increase participant baseline reading ability.
- Increase participant enrollment in the CNA course.
- Increase participant knowledge of finding, applying for, gaining, and keeping employment.

Currently, Pre-NA courses are offered on the Columbus, Grand Island, and Hastings campuses in Nebraska. The class is held three hours a week, usually one night per week. It is taught by a Project HELP instructor. The curriculum was written by the vocational English as a second language (VESL) specialist with the assistance of an NA instructor, who currently teaches the Pre-NA course.

One resource needed to conduct the class is the NA textbook. In addition, Project HELP has written its own curriculum to focus on the medical vocabulary with which students must demonstrate proficiency when they take the CNA course. In the Pre-NA class, very few skills are taught because those skills will be the focus during the NA course and because instructors for the Pre-NA class are generally not nurses who would be qualified to teach the skills portion of the course.

The arrangements to conduct this course were orchestrated through the adult education department at Central Community College. Project HELP follows the payment rules and student

orientation process of the adult education department for students enrolling in the Pre-NA class. Approvals for Project HELP to offer this Pre-NA class were obtained from both the adult education department and the extended learning services department.

One of the obstacles encountered in offering the Pre-NA class is having enough students at the 3rd- to 5th-grade reading level at the same time who can take the class together. It may not be possible to offer a class every semester because of the number of students who sign up.

Pre-NA courses offer successful remediation for students to improve their reading ability and knowledge of medical terminology in order to gain entry into certified nursing assistant courses.